

Public Hearing – February 17, 2009
Appropriations Committee

Remarks by Diana L. Insolio, President, Madison Land Conservation Trust, Inc.
regarding Bill 828 and Governor Rell's proposal to divert \$12 million annually from the
Community Investment Act (CIA) to the state's General Fund.

On behalf of the Madison Land Conservation Trust, I would like to assert our opposition to Governor Rell's proposal to divert \$12 million annually from the Community Investment Act to the State's General Fund. Established in 2005, the CIA has funded more than 330 projects in 130 towns. We at the Madison Land Trust are particularly focused on that part of the CIA that funds Open Space protection. The South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority has announced its intention to sell approximately 200 acres of land in Madison in the next 5 to 10 years. I feel confident in predicting that the land trust would not be able to purchase these lands without funding from the state's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. Diverting \$12 million from the CIA would diminish our chances to protect this land for future generations.

In 2003, prior to the establishment of the CIA, the Madison Land Conservation Trust was fortunate enough to obtain a grant from the state's Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program, and we are grateful to the State for the funding. The state grant allowed us to purchase 115 acres of land from the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority. We call it the Neck River Uplands and we have blazed some beautiful trails there that draw hikers from towns in the New Haven and Middlesex counties. This 115 acres can never be developed, thanks to the state's open space funding. They are a gift to our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who will find the land just as it exists today.

The land trust would like to repeat that performance with at least some of the parcels that the Water Authority plans to sell in the next 5 to 10 years. If we don't protect those parcels, and they are developed, we will never be able to protect them again. Diverting money from the CIA to the general fund would be penny wise and pound foolish. It might help us out financially in the short term, but when the financial tides turn, we will be sorely disappointed if we find the land that we wanted to save has been developed and is no longer open space.